



BUSINESSSENSE

Make 2022 work for you

By Tim Kelly

Here's hoping that everyone had a great Christmas and New Year and that you enjoyed spending time with friends, relatives and loved ones, or "FRL" as I call them – those who make you Feel Really Loved. Last month I looked back over the previous year, and the one thing I think everyone missed was having that social interaction, meeting people in real life and actually bumping into people by accident.

How different that was to the past two years to then finally start coming out of lockdown restrictions and enjoying the company of others, though things were starting to look a bit sketchy at the time of writing this in December. The Refinishing Trade Show in September was a fantastic reminder of this as I met people I had been speaking with on Facebook or my training sessions on Zoom; to meet them and share conversations with them made me feel happier than digital interactions.

It was a massive shame that the *bodyshop* Awards couldn't go ahead in December – I was seriously looking forward to meeting up with some old friend and celebrating the winners of the awards – but at least we'll have that to look forward to in April.

If there is one thing we need to draw from last year to this year is that we (as an industry) need to get together more often, and share information. If we cannot meet up in life, we need to be meeting up virtually and working together in challenging the ways insurers are treating the repair industry.

If we don't, there will not be an industry in a very short amount of time. I have been looking at developing different workstreams for myself. I have been focusing on engaging with classic car clubs, having visited the Classic Motor Show at the NEC in November and Jonny Smith's Late Brake Show at the Manchester GMEX. In

total, I contacted 60 car clubs who are all now looking to use or offer my services to members.

Aside from the price of a ticket and a lot of walking and talking to get engagement, this was free marketing.

We know how bad the repair industry is in terms of lack of profit, dealing with insurers, and getting and retaining staff, but if you reduce your dependency of working with insurers and switch your focus to other types of more profitable work, it will do more than just keep your lights on, it could potentially resolve the things that the industry is most unhappy about.

How many of you market yourself at any type of car show?

I recently did a post on the Refinishing Crew Facebook forum about the diversity of what you can do. Watching Paint by Rach's Rachel Murray and Cathy Greenwood painting a yacht in Italy, customising ladies shoes by hydro-dipping, or spraying window frames on buildings, shows what options are out there. But then looking at the SMART repair side, how paint-less dent removal is developing along interior repairs, with new products and tools that provide potentially greater profit streams for a business by repairing vehicles quicker.

All of these things make me feel more positive for the industry going into 2022. All you need to do is change what you are doing if what you are doing at the moment is not working.

If it is working, can you do it better? Has someone else in the industry done it already and can you replicate what they do?

My business has never stopped evolving from when I started and I continue to keep setting new targets. I plan, I look where I am and where I want to be. It is clear many in the industry do not and this year is your chance to change that. Make 2022 your year.